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# Human Rights and Renewing of Religious Discourse: How Can the Arab World benefit from the Experiences of the non-Arab Islamic World?

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# Rethinking the Qur'ân: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics \*

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<sup>\*</sup>This a shortened and modified version of my inaugural lecture delivered on May 27, 2004 for Ibn Rushd Academic Chair, for Islam and Humanism, established by the University of Humanistics, Utrecht, The Netherlands, which was published in the same date by the university press: ISBN 90 6665 605 0

The world has already become, whether for good or for bad, one small village in which no independent closed culture, if there is any, can survive. Cultures have to negotiate, to give and take, to borrow and deliver, a phenomenon that is not new or invented in the modern context of globalization. The history of the world culture tells us that the wave of civilization was probably born somewhere around the basin of rivers, probably in black Africa, Egypt or Iraq, before it moved to Greece, then returned to the Middle East in the form of Hellenism. With the advent of Islam, a new culture emerged absorbing and reconstructing the Hellenistic as well as the Indian and Iranian cultural elements before it was handed to the Western New World via Spain and Sicily.

Shall I mention here the name of the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd, know as Averroes in the Latin Milieu, and the importance of his writings in constructing synthesis of both the Aristotelian and the Islamic legacies, thus, transfusing new intellectual light to the European dark ages.

Why is it now so vital for Muslims to rethink the Qur'ân? Besides the present context of Western Islamophobia, especially after the trauma of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the aftermath terrorism operations everywhere in the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim World, which reduced Islam to be radical, violent and exclusive, it should be emphasized how important this invitation to 'rethink the Qur'ân' is for all Muslims regardless of their ethnical and cultural diversity. I am not here claiming any missionary task to formulate a specific Islam, but rather situating my hermeneutical position.

The process of 'rethinking tradition' as well as negotiating the 'meaning' of the Qur'ân in the Muslim World has been, however, an ongoing development since the eighteenth century. I would like to argue not only for the continuation of this process of rethinking but for moving it further toward a constructive method for Muslims, wherever they are, to be actively engaged in formulating the 'meaning of life' in the world in which they live.

In they year 2000 I was honored the Cleveringa rotated Chair of Law, Freedom and Responsibility, especially Freedom of Religion and Conscience by the Chair's curatorium at the University of Leiden. In my inaugural lecture on Monday 27 November 2000, I presented the concept of the Qur'ân as a space of Divine and Human Communication. Under the title 'The Qur'ân: God and Man in Communication', I attempted a rereading, and therefore re-interpretation, of some basic principal assumptions contained in the classical disciplines, known as 'the sciences of the Qur'ân', 'ulûm al-Qur'ân in Arabic, especially those sciences which deal with the nature of the Qur'ân, its history and its structure.

In such rereading, and re-interpretation, I employed some methodological apparatus, such as semantics, semiotics as well as historical criticism and hermeneutics that are not generally applied, nor appreciated, in the traditional Qur'ânic studies in the Muslim World. I focused in my analysis on the *Vertical* dimension of revelation, *wahy* in Arabic, i.e., the communicative process between God and the Prophet Muhammad that produced the Qur'ân. As this vertical communications, which lasted for more than 20 years, produced multiplicity of discourses (in the form of verses, passages, short chapters) these discourses had a chronological order.

In the process of canonization, from which the canonized scripture emerged as *mushaf*, this chronological order was not preserved; it was replaced by what is now known as the 'recitation order' while the chronological is know as the 'descend order', *tartîb al-nuzûl*. According to the orthodox view, the Qur'ân was perfectly preserved in oral form from the beginning and was written down during Muhammad's lifetime or shortly thereafter when it was "collected" and arranged for the first time by his Companions. The complete consonantal text is believed to have been established during the reign of the third caliph, `Uthmân (644-56), and the final vocalized text in the early 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. It is important even if we uncritically adopt the Orthodox view to realize another human dimension present in this process of canonization, which entailed the early rearrangement and the late application of signs of vocalization to the only consonantal script.

In this paper, I would like to develop my thesis about the human aspect of the Qur'ân one-step further moving from the vertical dimension towards the *Horizontal* dimension of the Qur'ân. By the horizontal dimension I mean something more than the canonization, or what some other scholars identify as the act of the prophet gradual propagation of the message of the Qur'ân after receiving it, or the spread of the message through the 'interpretive corpus'. I do mean the horizontal dimension in and during the process of communication itself. This horizontal dimension that is embedded in the 'structure' of the Qur'ân and was manifest during the process of communication itself. This dimension could only be realized if we shift our conceptual framework from the Qur'ân as a 'text' to the Qur'ân as 'discourse'.

#### 1-The Qur'an as 'Discourse:

Recently, Muhammad Arkoun and others rightly distinguish between the phenomenon of the Qur'ân, the recited discourse, and the *Mushaf*, which contains what Arkoun identifies as the 'Closed Corpus' or Scripture through the process of canonization explained above, which transformed the recited discourse into scripture or a 'text'. I would like to bypass today this historical moment of transformation known in the history of every religion. Since that historical moment Muslim scholars of the Qur'ân, though theoretically aware of the impact of this transformation and occasionally return back to the pre-text structure of the Qur'ân, never were able to recapture the living phenomenon, the Qur'ân as a 'dicourse'.

Modern scholars of the Qur'ân share the concept of the Qur'ân as a 'text' despite the different paradigm of 'meaning' each tries to grasp and deduce from the Qur'ân. Dealing with the Qur'ân as only a 'text' enhance the possibilities of interpretation and reinterpretation but allows as well the ideological manipulation not only of the meaning but also of the 'structure', following the pattern of polemic interpretation of theologians.

I was one of the propagators of the textuality of the Qur'ân under the influence of the literary approach initiated by the modern, and still appreciated, literary approach<sup>3</sup>. I recently began to realize how dealing with the Qurân as only a text reduces its status and ignores the fact that it is still functioning as a 'discourse' in everyday life.<sup>4</sup>

The volume entitled 'The Qur'ân as Text', which presents the proceedings of the symposium held in 1993 in the Oriental Seminar of the University of Bonn, enjoyed so many reprint<sup>5</sup>, because it introduces the shift to which Stefan Wild refers, at least in the Western Qur'ânic scholarship, from the paradigm of the 'genesis' of the Qur'ân, whether Jewish or Christian, to the paradigm of *textus receptus*.

It is true that the Qur'ânic *textus receptus*, the Qur'ân as a text contained in the *mushaf*, shaped and shapes the religious convictions of Muslims and is the central cultural text in so many Islamic cultures. This is absolutely true but only when we limit our definition of 'convictions' and 'cultures' to the high levels, the 'convictions, and 'cultures' of the elite. On the lower level of 'cultures' and

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Muhammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam, common questions, uncommon answers*, translated by Robert D. Lee, Westview Press, 1994, pp. 35-40; *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Saqi books & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London 2002, p. 99. See for the views of Hasan Hanafî my *Naqd al-Khitâb al-Dînî* (Critique of Religious Discourse), Cairo, second edition, p. 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See for example my *Mafhûm al-Nass: drâsa fî `ulûm al-Qur'ân* (The Concept of the Text: study in the Qur'ânic sciences, Beirut and Casablanca, first published 1990, fourth reprint 1998. For more about the literary approach see my "The Dilemma of the Literary Approach to the Qur'an, ALIF, Journal of Comparative Poetics, the American University Cairo (AUC), No. 23, Literature and the Sacred, 2003, pp. 8-47.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> I owe this realization to the research for writing a long article about 'the Qur'ân in Everyday Life' to the Encyclopedia of the Qur'ân, Brill Leiden, see vol. 2 (2002), pp. 80-98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Stefan Wild (ed.), E.J, Brill, Leiden, first print 1996.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. viii in the introduction.

'convictions, on the level of the masses, it is more the recited Qur'ân, the phenomenon of the Qur'ân as discourse, that plays the most important rule in shaping the public consciousness.

For Muslim scholars the Qur'ân was always a text, from the moment of its canonization till now. It is time now to pay close attention to the Qur'ân as discourse or discourses. It is not sufficient any more to re-contextualiz a passage or some passages when it is only needed to fight against literalism and fundamentalism or when it is needed to wave away certain historical practice that seems unfit in our modern context. It is also not enough to invoke modern hermeneutics in order to justify the historicity and, therefore, the relativity of every mode of understanding claiming in the meantime that our modern interpretation is the more appropriate and the more valid. These insufficient approaches produce either polemic or apologetic hermeneutics. In other words, dealing with the Qur'ân only as a text will always produce 'authoritative' 'totalitarian' hermeneutics, one that claims attaining the absolute truth.

Without rethinking the Qur'ân, without re-invoking its living status as a 'discourse', whether in the academia or in everyday life no democratic hermeneutics can be achieved. It has to be democratically open hermeneutics because it is about the 'meaning of life'. If we are serious and sincere in freeing religious thought from power manipulation, whether political, social, or religious in order to return the formulation of 'meaning' back to the community of believers, we need to construct open democratic hermeneutics.

According to this open democratic hermeneutics, the empirical diversity of the religious meaning is part of our human diversity about the meaning of life in general, which is supposed to be a positive value in our modern living context. In order to re-connect the question of the meaning of the Qur'ân to the question of the meaning of life it is now imperative to indicate the fact that the Qur'ân was the outcome of dialogue, debate, argumentation, accepting and rejecting, not only with pre-Islamic norms, practice and culture, but with its own previous assessments, presupposition, assertions etc.

It might be surprising to claim that in the early Muslim era, before the Qur'an was fully canonized, and definitely before Islam was fully institutionalized, that the differentiation between the Qur'an, the still alive discourse, and the *mushaf*, the silent text, was still very much alive and recognized.

# 2-The Qur'an versus the *Mushaf*: the spoken and the silent,

It was the Fourth caliph `Alî (656-660) the cousin of Muhammad and his son in law who claimed the *mushaf* as silent; it does not speak, but humans speak it out. The context in which this statement emerged is important, because it could shed a lot of light on the present situation in which the political manipulation of the meaning of the Qur'ân is hardly cancelled.

It was in the context of `Alî, the legal chosen Caliph, fighting against Mu`âwiyya, the governor of Syria who did not recognize `Alî's authority, in the battle of Siffîn in 657. Mu`âwiya's star seemed to be sinking, when his collaborator `Amr b. al-`Âs advised him to have his soldiers hoist copies of the Qur'ân on their lances. This gesture, famous in Muslim history, did not imply surrender; by this means Mu`âwiya invited the combatants to resolve the question by consultation of the Qur'ân. Weary of fighting the two armies laid down their arms. `Alî was forced by his partisans to submit the difference to arbitration, as proposed by Mu`âwiya, and further to choose the arbitrator for his side from among the "neutrals" So sure were his followers that they were in the right! In these decisions the *qurrâ*', those who memorize the whole Qur'ân by heart and are the professional recitors, played a large part. The mission of the arbitrators was to consult the Qur'ân "from the first to the last sûra" and, in default of clear indications in the sacred Book, the sunna of the Prophet, excluding what might give rise to divergences. As it was not clearly defined what the subject of consultation was certain individuals had protested against recourse to arbitration with the cry *lâ hukma illâ li'llâh*, literally "no arbitrator but God". The phrase implied that it was absolutely

improper to apply to men for a decision since, for the case in dispute, there existed a divine ordinance in the Qur'anic verse 49:8-9: "If two parties of the Believers fight with one another, make peace between them, but if one rebels (baghat) against the other, then fight against that one which rebels (allatî tabghî), until it returns to obedience to God ...". The dissidents maintained that it was 'Alî's duty to continue to fight against Mu'âwiya, as no new fact had intervened to alter the situation.

In response to such a cry 'Alî made the differentiation between the silent *mushaf*, the text, in one hand, and the vocalized Qur'an by the people on the other hand. This statement of 'Alî, which is heavily quoted by modernist Muslim scholars to only indicate the multiple possibilities of interpretation, and the possibility of political manipulation of the Qur'ânic meaning as well, has more implication than has been realized. The vocalization of the Qur'ân, whether in liturgy, in everyday life, in any social, political or ethical dispute, carries with it certain mode of interpretation and re-interpretation by ways of intonation and appropriation.<sup>8</sup> The Qur'ân is a living phenomenon, like the music played by the orchestra while the *mushaf*, the written text, is analogous to the musical note; it is silent. A hermeneutics of the Qur'an has to take seriously the living phenomenon and to stop reducing the Qur'ân to be *only* a text.

The modern political Islamist movements whether radical or moderate agree on God's absolute authority in determining and stipulating the regulations of the detailed behavior of the individual as well as the laws that govern the society as a whole. Such claim of the absolute Divine source of legislation, in modern political hermeneutics is based on the similar claim of the protestors against arbitration. While the protestors of the seventh century cried 'no arbitrator but God' by interpreting the Qur'ânic vocabulary yahkum as to judge or arbitrate the modern political protestors understand the same word as to rule by way of legislation.

This political and ideological manipulation can also be found in the classical era of Islam. Based entirely on an explicit assertion that the Qur'an is only a text, its manipulation continued.

# 3-The 'Text' Reconstructed and Manipulated:

In was in my first book (1982)9 when I started to examine the different methods of interpretation applied to the Our'an as a 'text' in traditional Islamic theology. I investigated the emergence of the concept of "metaphor" that was introduced to Arabic rhetoric at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century by the rationalist school of theology, known as the Mu'tazilites, through their effort to explain the anthropomorphic images of God in the Qur'an, on the one hand, and the verses that seem to support a doctrine of "predestination", on the other. The Mu'tazilites employed the concept of "metaphor" as a linguistic tool to interpret those types of verses of the Qur'an that they considered "ambiguous". This forged a powerful instrument to interpret the Qur'ânic text according to the Mu'tazilites' transcendentalist standards: where it suited their ideas, the Qur'ânic text was labeled "clear" and, therefore, not in need for metaphorical interpretation; where it did not, it was considered to be "ambiguous" and need to be interpreted metaphorically.

The main conclusion I have reached, after comparing the Mu'tazilites' and the anti-Mu'tazilites' discourses, was that the Qur'an became the site of a fierce intellectual and political battle. That battle was sited at one of the most important junctures of the structure of the Qur'ânic

<sup>7</sup> Cf. article 'Alî b. Abû Tâlib, the Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition, E. Brill, Leiden, vol. 1, p. 381ff. Henceforth EI

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> For examples of different ways of intonations and appropriations of the Qur'anic verses see the article 'Everyday life, Qur'ân in' in the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân, E. Brill, Leiden, vol. 11. (2002), pp. 80-97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Al-Ittijâh al-`âqlî fî 'l-Tafsîr: Dirâsa fî Qadiyat al-Majâz fî `l-Qur'ân `nd 'l-Mu`tazila (The Rational Tened in Qurânic Exegesis: investigation of the concept of 'mtapher' in the Qur'an established by the Mu'tazilites), The Arabic Cultural Center, Casablanca and Beirut, first published in 1982 and so many reprints followed.

text (Qur'ân, 3:7). Both the Mu'tazilites and their opponents agree on the principle that the Qur'ân includes ambiguous verses as well as clear verses, and that the "clear" should furnish the norms for disambiguating the ambiguous. However, they disagree when it comes to practical implementation; thus, the controversy does not only revolve around the meaning of the Qur'ân, it also involves its structure. What the Mu'tazilites considered as "clear" is considered as "ambiguous" by their opponents, and vice versa. Such intellectual disputes about the structure and the meaning of the Qur'ân constituted the first hermeneutical principle as the dichotomy between clarity and ambiguity.

The intellectual opponents of the Mu'tazilites were the traditionalists, who upheld the literal interpretation of all Qur'ânic verses, to the extent that they affirmed the existential reality of all divine attributes, all the eschatological images, and even the idea that God can be seen by human eyes. The Mu'tazilites objected to their idea that the literal interpretation of the holy text was a religious duty, regarding it as an obstacle to the fulfillment of mankind's destiny. They believed that God himself imposed on mankind the duty to acquire real knowledge by using his rational faculties.

I will explain later that this conjecture declaring 'clarity' and 'ambiguity' in the Qur'ân is part of the dialogue discourse of the Qur'ân, the dialogue with the Christians of Arabia, the *Nasârâ*. Taken by the theologian as establishing rule or a principal of hermeneutics was only possible on the assumption of the 'textuality' of the Qur'ân.

As for the jurists, their approach is based on another structural principle that differentiates between the 'early' and the 'late' revelations. According to this principle, there should be no contradiction in any prescription or proscription, because the 'late' always abrogates the 'early'.

Though they seem to have certain awareness concerning the Qur'ân as 'discourse', it presented to them a problem that needs to be solved. They did not understand that the different rulings of the Qur'ân could be positive phenomenon, a diversity that should be kept open as options for the community of believers to be able to compete with the ever-changing social order; they instead aimed at fixing the meaning by considering the gradual process of revelation as gradual development in the content of the message. Considering the later revelation to be the final and the previous to be provisional they applied the concept of 'abrogation', thus, eliminating all the previous options in favor of the last revealed articulation. According to this concept of abrogation the Qur'ân is divided into four categories:

1-Verses and passages that are entirely deleted from the present Closed Corpus, i.e., they once belonged to the Qur'ân, but now they do not belong to the Qur'ân any more.

2-Verses and passages that their rules and stipulation are not valid any more, but they still exist in the Qur'ân to be recited; their legal power is deleted not their divine status as God speech. The verses concerning alcohol are the example

3-Verses and passages that their rules and stipulation are valid though they are deleted from the Qur'ân; the stoning penalty for fornication committed by married people belongs to this category.

4-the fourth category is of course the passages and verses that were not subject to abrogation. 11

<sup>10</sup> He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: in it are clear, well established verses; they are the backbone of the Book: others are ambiguous. Those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is ambiguous seeking discord and searching for its hidden meanings but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord"; and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding. Reference to Qur'ânic citations are indicated always in this paper by the chapter's number according to Cairo edition followed by the verse or verses' number. For translation, Yusuf 'Ali's is used as only guiding reference.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> For more detailed explanation see art, *nashk* by J. Burton in EI, vol. V11, pp.10010ff. See also the same author's article 'abrogation' in the Encyclopedia of the Qur'ân (EQ henceforth), Brill Leiden vol. 1, 2001, pp. 11ff.

As the chronological order of the Suras of the Qur'an is not yet scientifically determined, the problematic of the passages' chronological order is far beyond satisfactory solution. We, therefore, find different opinion among the classical jurists about which passage abrogated which. The later Jurists, for example, exaggerated in employing the principle of 'abrogation' to the extent that some of them claimed that one single verse –the Sword verse (9:5 "And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter, and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers. (...) And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for Allah") - has abrogated more than one hundred verses.

We can realize how the problem of diversity and contradiction was randomly solved in such a way that led to an extreme claim such as that. The problem as I see it has its root in the fact the Qur'an is perceived as, first and above all, the verbatim utterance of God, thus divine and untouchable text, and, second, as a text. If a human text is supposed to be well structured and coherent, the divine text is absolutely supreme in its structure as well as its coherence; no possibility whatsoever for contradiction.

In modern Islamic hermeneutics, we can hardly find any breakthrough the classical paradigm of Qur'ânic hermeneutics. The literary approach, employed be many modern scholars all over the Muslim World, though built on a more developed literary concepts, is also reducing the Qur'ân to the level of a *mere* text.

Now, the question is, 'could any hermeneutics ignore the fact that the Qur'ân is not *only* a text?' So far, the history of exegesis shows that the Qur'ân has been dealt with as a text that needs only a structural and philological analysis to uncover its meaning. This is obvious in the theological as well as the philosophical approach, which is built on the assumption of the 'clarity-ambiguity' dichotomy, and which survived till today. As we have seen already such a dichotomy facilitates the semantic manipulation of the Qur'ânic meaning. Dealing with the Qur'ân as 'discourse' would present a rather different paradigm that might enhance our proposed hermeneutics.

What follow will be only some examples of the some characteristic of the Qur'ânic discourse; a comprehensive and detailed projection needs a book. I hope that the following examples will present only the skeleton of a broader project.

# 4- Polyphonic not Monophonic, Who Speaks and Who Listens?

Because the concept of the Qur'ân as only 'text, is dominating east and west there is a difficulty in presenting an accurate typology of the Qur'ânic structure The Encyclopedia of Islam's categorization of the 'Literary Form' of the Qur'ân, for example, is based on a mixture of 'style'-structure and 'content' norms, thus the literary forms are numerated as: a. Oaths and related forms; b. Sign-passages; c. Say-passages; d. Narratives; e. Regulations; f. Liturgical forms and Others. 12

Muhammad Arkoun, though emphasizing the structure of the Qur'ân as a discourse, following Paul Ricoeur's typology of the Bible, which is based on a text's oriented definition, distinguishes five types of discourse utilized in the Qur'ân, 'prophetic, legislative, narrative, sapiental and hymnal (poetic)'<sup>13</sup> However, he maintains a notion of one structure of 'grammatical relations' and one 'realm of grammatical communication' defined in all Qur'ânic discourse. <sup>14</sup> Here the diversity and the multiplicity of the grammatical relations and the grammatical communications are reduced to one singular dominating structure.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See art. Qur'ân, EI, vol. v, pp 400ff, section 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Rethinking Islam, p.38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> ibid., pp. 38-39.

As a discourse the Our'an is polyphonic not monophonic; there are so many voices in which the 'I' speaker is not always defined as the Divine voice. Sometimes the Divine voice is presented in the form of the third person 'He' preceded by the imperative "say" addressing Muhammad as in the chapter 112, one of the early chapter revealed in Mecca:

Say: He is Allah the One;

Allah the Eternal Absolute;

He begets not nor is He begotten;

And there is none like Him

The voice of the speaker in the first revealed verses of the Our'an, where the addressee is obviously Muhammad (1-5, chapter 96), is the voice of the Angel who appeared to him at the cave of Hirâ'; 15 it seems to be that the Angel was introducing Muhammad to the Lord. The lord is introduces in the third person.

Recite, in the name of your Lord who creates

Creates man from a clot.

Recite; your Lord is the Most Bounteous,

Who teaches by the pen,

Teaches man that which he knew not.

Moreover, in the hymn or/and the liturgical passages the voice of the speaker is the human voice and the addressee is the Divine being. The best example is the opening chapter of the Our'an to be recited in the daily obligatory five prayers by every Muslim.

Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds.

The Compassionate, the Merciful.

Master of the Day of Judgment.

It is You whom we worship and it is You from Whom we seek help

Guide us to the right course,

The course of those whom You blessed.

Not the course of whom provoked Your anger neither those who got astray.

Interestingly, the recitation of this chapter is considered as invoking God's response, but while the recitation is explicit the Divine response is implicit. In other words, the recitor has to slowly recite the verses pausing to receive the answer. In other words, recitation of this chapter contains both vocalization and attentive hearing, samâ. The following report is narrated as a (qudsî) hadith where God says:

salât is divided between Me and My servant into equal shares

When he says, praise be to God, the Lord of the whole world,

I say, My servant praised Me;

When he says, The Compassionate The Merciful,

I say, My servant exalted me;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> According to the report narrated and related to the prophet on the account of his wife `Âisha, about the first encounter between Muhammad and the Holly Spirit, Gabriel, see, The Life of Muhammad (translation of Ibn Ishâq's Sîrat Rasûl Allâh with introduction and notes by A. Guillaume, Pakistan Branch, Oxford University Press, Lahore, first published 1955, reprint 1967, p. 105

When he says, the Master of the Day of Judgment,

I say, My servant glorified me;

When he says, It is You whom we worship and it is You from Whom we seek help

I say, this is between Me and My servant; all what My servant asked for is guaranteed;

When he says, guide us to the right course, the course of those whom You blessed, not the course of whom provoked Your anger neither those who got astray,

I say, these are for my servant and all are guaranteed for him<sup>16</sup>.

This type of implicit dialogue between man and God, where man, reciting God's speech, becomes the speaker, and God, the Speaker becomes recipient, is very explicit in the structure of the Qur'ân.

## 5- Dialogue:

To mention example of 'dialoging' it is sufficient to refer to what is categorized as the 'say passages' in the Encyclopedia of Islam where the structure 'they say ... you say is frequented. Some times the 'they' refers to the unbelievers provoking Muhammad or making blasphemous statement against his lord. The dialogical nature is also obvious in the early chapter where Muhammad is advised not to negotiate with the unbelievers, the polytheists:

Say: O you who reject to believe!

I worship not that which you worship

Nor will you worship that which I worship.

And I will not worship that which you have been worshipping

Nor will you worship that which I worship.

To you be your Way and to me mine.

The repetition of the fact that there is no way is signifying the existence of strong opposition in the side of the unbelievers and counter invitation to Muhammad for exchange of worshipping. In other words, the style structure of the above short chapter reveals the existence of dialogue into which the chapter is engaged.

But when an attack is launched against Muhammad and his prophetship is questioned the Our'an defends Muhammad. The issue of the authenticity of the divine source of the Our'an, and therefore the issue of Muhammad's sincerity, honesty, trustworthy - his credibility- was always contested by the people of Mecca. The allegation that Muhammad forged and fabricated the Qur'an is disputed and responded to not in the style form of 'they say', but it is understood from the refutation that it is a response. This is very characteristic of the 'discourse' structure, i.e., its involvement and engagement with another implicit, or explicit, discourse.

The Arabs tried every mean to explain the Qur'ânic unusual effect on them by explaining it in terms of all types of discourse known to them, discourses like 'soothsaying', poetry and even performing witchcraft. All their explanations were mentioned and refuted. When the Arabs explain the nature of the Qur'an as 'poetry' and accuse the prophet of composing it, the answer given to such an explanation and accusation is: "We have not taught him poetry; it is not seemly for him" (chapter 36:69). When they say that Muhammad is nothing but a soothsayer the Qur'ân replies: "By

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See Al-Muwatta' by Mâlik b. Anas, kitâb al-nidâ' li-'salât, no. 174; Sahîh Muslim, kitâb al-salât, no. 598. All hadîth quotations cited in this paper are taken from Sakhr CD program Mawsû'at al-Hadîth al-Sharîf, Copyright Sakhr Software Co. 1995.

your Lord's blessing you are not a soothsayer neither possessed" (chapter 52:29). In the context of that debate the nonbelievers claimed that the Qur'ân was nothing but some stories forged by Muhammad and claimed they were revealed to him from God. They claimed that they are able to produce similar discourse. Facing such a challenge, the Qur'ân made its own counter challenge asking them to bring forth 'ten forged chapters like it' (chapter: 11: 13).

When the nonbelievers failed to respond to this strong challenge, the Qur'ân, pretending to make it easier for them, decreased the challenge from 'ten' chapters to only 'one' (chapter 10:38). The last step was to indicate the absolute failure of the Arabs in challenging the authenticity of the Qur'ân:

"And if you are in doubt concerning that We have sent down on Our servant (Muhammad) then bring a chapter like it, and call your witnesses, apart from God, if you are truthful. And if you do not-and you will not- then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and idols, prepared to unbelievers" (chapter 2: 23-24).

This dispute and debate with the polytheist Arab grounded the development of the doctrine of  $i j\hat{a}z$ , the stylistic and literary incompatibility, or supremacy of the Qur'ân.

Another common form of the dialog is the dialogue with the believers in the form "They will ask you [Muhammad] ... you say" which is attested 15 times in the Qur'ân. These questions to which the Qur'ân responds cover different areas of interest. Questions were raised about wine and gambling (chapter 2:219), about the orphans (chapter 2:220), menstruation (chapter 2:222), dietary law (Chapter 5:4) charity (chapter 2:215,219), prohibition of fighting during the sacred month (chapter 2:217), and spoils of ware (chapter 8:1) Providing answers to such questions, much of the legal aspect of the Qur'ân was gradually articulated, thus reflecting the dialogical nature of the Qur'ân with the human interest.

Would the answers provided in the dialogical context be considered final legislation? What about different answers given to questions related to one issue? Lets take the example of intermarriage, which is one always provoked in any discussion about Human Rights in Islam. While in chapter 5:5 Muslims are allowed to marry non-Muslim females, such permission seems to be revoked in chapter 2:221. The question is which rule will prevail? The second question, which is only provoked in the modern age, is whether this permission is guaranteed only to male Muslim or should it be extended to the female as well?

Ibn Rushd tells us about two positions held by the jurists; the position of those who hold the permissibility considers 2:221 as presenting the general, the preference to marry a Muslim female, while 5:5 particularize the general. The position of those who prohibit intermarriage is grounded on 'abrogation', i.e., that 2:221 abrogated 5:5. 17

If we deal with the Qur'ân as discourse we can go far beyond the jurists' outlook that is motivated by law formulation that needs certain mode of fixation. Each of the two verses is an independent discourse; while 2:221 reflects the non-negotiable stand with the polytheists, a position we earlier referred to, the verse of 5:5 is about 'togetherness' in social life. It about 'making good things lawful'; it starts with 'food' indicating not only that the 'the food of the people of the book' is lawful to Muslims but that 'the food of Muslims' is lawful to the people of the book as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> "The majority (of the jurists) upheld the permissibility of marriage with the *kitâbiyyat* (women of the people of the book) who are free (not slaves) through a contract, as the principle is to construe (by exemption) the particular from the general (=one of the principles of textual deduction). The words of the Exalted ... -(giving permission to marry women of the people of the book in 5:5)- is particular, while His words -(in 2:221 not to wed idolatress till they believe)- is general. Those (jurists) who inclined toward its prohibition, which is the opinion of some of the *fuqahâ'*, jurists, considered the general meaning (in 5:5) to have abrogated the particular (in 2:221)" Ibn Rushd, *Bidâyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (A beginning for who is to be an independent jurist and a sufficient (source) for who is just seeking to learn not to be an expert), Vol. 11, p. 51.

This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them.

This is a discourse about, first of 'good' things being lawful'; the first example of these 'good things' is sharing food. Intermarriage is introduced here as part of parcel of 'good things' which emphasizes the implicit call for social 'togetherness'.

Lawful unto you in marriage are chaste women who are believers as well as chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when you give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.<sup>18</sup>

Addressing the modern question about equality in intermarriage, it suffices here to emphasize that the addressee of the Qur'ânic discourse in matters of marriage and divorce are males; it is after all a discourse which emerged in a patriarchal environment. Since the addressee are males; it is understandable that permission is voiced to men to marry, divorce, and marry off their relative females. If we recognize that, we are in a better position to enunciate that, according to paradigm-shift of meaning where equality is essential component, equality in intermarriage is possible. <sup>19</sup>

The justification provided by modern `ulamâ` to sustain the classical position could be easily negotiated. Addressing the modern question about equality in intermarriage, it suffices here to say that they still belief in the superiority of the male in the family affair, and accordingly they argue that the faith of non-Muslim women married to Muslim men will be respected. If a Muslim woman is married to non-Muslim, they fear that the non-Muslim husband will not respect the faith of his Muslim wife. They also invoked that Islam, being the last of God's revelation pays respect to both Judaism and Christianity, therefore, the faith of a non-Muslim woman married to a Muslim man is protected by the husband's faith. The reverse position is not possible, because Christianity does only recognize Judaism while Judaism recognizes neither Christianity nor Islam.

It is obvious that the 'ulamâ' are still imprisoned in the patriarchal 'world vision' in one hand, and in the religious vision of the world on the other hand. Marriage decision is, or should be, the decision of the individual; it is her or his decision to set the condition she or he wants for the future life with spouse. The issue at steak is not so much intermarriage; it is rather the individual freedom that entails freedom of religion and belief. There is no time or space to address this issue here. It suffices to mention that there is no one single verse in the Qur'ân stipulating world punishment, or legal penalty, for apostasy; freedom of religion in the form of 'no coercion' is widely quoted even by the traditional 'ulamâ', but in an apologetic manner.

## 6- Negotiation;

As we have already shown the non-negotiation position with the polytheists brings about an exclusive mode of discourse; the only possible way of communication is dispute, debate and rejection. The discourse with the believers varies according to the way they handle their problem, according to their success they are praised; when they fail they are blamed and even condemned. This is also true for the Prophet himself. When he was busy preaching the rich people of Quraysh

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Chapter 5:5, and compare with 2:221 where another mode of discourse of no-negotiation with the polytheists is obvious "Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters) until they believe; a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman even though she allure you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: a man slave who believes is better than unbeliever even though he allure you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and forgiveness and makes His Signs clear to mankind: that they may celebrate His praise.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The legal opinion provided by the European Council of fatwâ to allow the continuation of the marriage for a newly converted Muslim female to her non-Muslim husband, which created a furious reaction in the Muslim World, was based on traditional early cases and justified on the wishful expectation that the guided wife will inspire the husband to convert.

hoping that they will add power to the newly formed community of believers he did not pay attention to a poor blind fellow, identified as Ibn Umm Maktûm by the early exegete, who came asking for advice. The Qur'ân strongly blames Muhammad's attitude addressing him at the beginning by the third person, a sign of negligence.

He frowned and turned away

When the blind man came to him

What would make you know that he might elevate himself (if you kindly responded to him)

Or be aware and such awareness brings him benefit

But as for whom who considers himself free from any need

To him you pay much attention

No blame on you if he would not elevate himself

As for who came to you striving (for knowledge)

While in fear (from God)

You did not pay attention to him! (Chapter 80:1-10)

The Qur'ânic discourse with the people of the book, the Jewish and the Christians, or the *Nasârâ*, is the negotiate discourse par excellence. It is well-known information that that Prophet Muhammad and his wife Khadîjah consulted for advice a Christian Arab priest Waraqa b. Nawfal, who happened to be a cousin of Khadîjah. The matter of consultation was the first encounter with the Holy Spirit during the vision Muhammad had when he was meditating on mountain *Hirâ*. <sup>20</sup>

It is also important to mention that the first Muslim migration *hijra* was to Abyssinia. In order to escape being persecuted by the people of Mecca, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to go there where, according to a statement related to the Prophet himself, "there is a Christian king who never does unjust to anyone." Muslims enjoyed his protection and hospitality till they returned back after the migration to Medina. During the period of their stay in Abyssinia, a delegation from Mecca visited the emperor persuading him to send Muslims back to Mecca. The envoys of Mecca told the Negus that those who were enjoying his protection and generosity were only some rebellions who protested against their own people's religion and converted not to Christianity but to unknown religion. In order to turn the Negus against Muslims they told him that they say blasphemy about Jesus Christ. When the Emperor asked Muslim refugees about their belief concerning Jesus they read to him this passage of the Qur'an from the chapter called 'Mary' or Maryam in Arabic (19).<sup>21</sup>

'Son of Mary' is one of the commonest titles given to Jesus in the Qur'ân in order to emphasize his human nature. Nevertheless, the Qur'ân also speaks of Jesus as 'a spirit from God' and 'His word caste into Mary' by the Holy Spirit. More than that: It was Jesus, according to the Qur'ân, who prophesied 'Ahmad' -Muhammad- to be the coming prophet.

And remember Jesus the son of Mary said: "O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of Allah (sent) to you confirming the Law (which came) before me and giving glad Tidings of an Apostle to come after me whose name shall be Ahmad." But when he came to them with Clear Signs they said "This is evident sorcery!" (61.6)

It was only after migration to Medina that Muslims started actual contact with the Arab Jewish tribes that came long before from Yemen and settled in Medina. The very well known 'Medina Covenant' between the Prophet and both the Jewish and pagan tribes indicates clearly an essential equality between all the peoples who lived in Medina. Liberty of religious practice was guaranteed on equal foot as long as all the parties defended the security of the city against any

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-152.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See the detailed account in *The Life of Muhammad*, op cited, pp. 106-7.

outside attack or intrusion. Concerning different types of religious faith, equality was essentially guaranteed unless a war is initiated against Muslim, then the war conditions as historically practiced are the rules.<sup>22</sup>

In this context the Qur'an prescribed *siyam*, fasting, for Muslims and in this also Muslims directed their prayers towards the same direction of the Jewish prayers, Jerusalem.

# 7-From Negotiation to Disputation:

But the relationship between the Muslim community and the Jewish community did not continue as smooth as it started. Polemic dispute stared, in which the Qur'ân engaged, to substitute the previous 'one religion' called 'Islam', that of all the prophets since Adam till Jesus:

1-Those who believed (in Muhammad), and those who became Jewish, and the Christians and the Sabian, any who believe in God and the last day, and do righteousness, shall have their reward from their Lord (11:62, also 5:69.)

2-Those who believed (in Muhammad), and those who became Jewish, and the Sabians, Christians, Magians, and polytheists, God will judge between them on the Day of Judgment (22:17.)

3-Say (Mohammed), the truth comes down from God: Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject: for the wrong doers We have prepared a fire (18:29.)

4-He who will turn back from his faith, soon will God bring about (other) people whom He will love and they will love him (5:4.)

5-Those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go in adding to their defiance of faith, never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have gone astray (3:90, also 4:137.)

The change of the praying direction for Muslims from Jerusalem to Mecca may indicate the first sign of demarcation between the two communities. The polemic dispute reaches sometimes the level of harsh condemnation, but sometimes it is a type of quite reminder of God's grace on the sons of Israel. This polemic dispute with its quite as well its harsh manifestation can be followed in chapter 2, called 'the Cow', because it contains certain narrative reflecting the arrogance of the sons of Israel to comply with the simple demands of their prophets. It is remarkable the existence of the imperative verb 'remember', about 19 times in chapter 2 only, addressed directly to the son of Israel preceding different narrative units of their history of reluctance and rejection to follow the right path.

Not being able to appreciate the 'discourse' structure it is likely to extend the discourse to be addressing all the Jewish people till now. It is not only a question of contextualization, which is pivotal in discourse analysis, but more than that it is what the discourse tells about the context and how. Now, the question is which is historical and which is universal, a question keeping all the modern liberal Muslim scholars of the Qur'ân busy to tackle. Because they are confined with the Qur'an as only 'text', the conservative win at the end of the day. When the liberal, for example emphasize 'togetherness' as the universal eliminating the 'hostility' limiting its meaning to the negative past the conservatives will apply the principal of 'abrogation' to historize 'togetherness' as abrogated and will universalize 'hostility' as the abrogate. In the present context of unsolved Palestinian-Israeli trauma, whose hermeneutics, or whose meaning is valid? The winner will be definitely the meaning of ghetto, separation and Isolation, the meaning of Mr. Sharon's wall.

The same is true about the polemic dispute with the Christians, the *Nasârâ*, about the nature of Jesus. We have shown already that the Qur'ân rendered Jesus prophesizing the coming of a prophet named Ahmad. And we have also seen how the chapter named Mary (19) was recited in the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Ibid., the full text of the document pp. 231-233.

court of the Negus and in the presence of the bishops. A quick reading of this chapter and comparison with Matthew's Gospel will easily reveal the common ground. Nevertheless, there is non-negotiable issue that keeps the boundaries vast between Muslim and Christians to the extent that the concept of 'togetherness' is almost forgotten.

The first issue is that of the Human Nature of Jesus according to the Qur'an and the divine nature according to the Churches' shared dogma. As we confines ourselves to the second chapter projecting the Qur'ânic discourse, or the Qur'ânic disputation with the Jews, we better also confine our presentation to the Qur'ânic disputation with the Nassârâ to chapter three, which in its very opening, verse 3, advocate the credibility of all the revealed scriptures.

It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step) in truth the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down Law (Of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this as a guide to mankind and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong).

In verse four, however, it presents the possibility of misunderstanding as to keep the shared ground as solid as possible. But we have to see the disputation context. While the Qur'an recognizes Jesus as a 'word' from God (verse 45) and presents the Apostles as Muslims (52), it was clearly indicated in the earlier chapter of Mary, by way of relating to the child Jesus the statement 'I am the servant of God' (19:30). This seems to have caused certain confusion for the Christians of Najrân who came to Medina to have a discussion with Muhammad.<sup>23</sup> The discussion became heated, probably after it was explained that the miraculous birth of Jesus, from a mother who had no intercourse with a male, makes him no different than Adam; the two cases are alike.

This similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam: He created him from dust then said to him: "Be" and he was (3:59)

Then the Qur'an made serious religious challenge that seems to cause fear among the members of the delegation. Here we can realize the 'power' of discourse, or the discourse as 'authoritarian'; such a powerful discourse was not possible to emerge in the Mecca simply because Muslims were small persecuted community. As the sources tells us the members of the Christian delegation withdrew preferring to pay annual collective amount of money jizya than to face a possible curse as the Qur'an provoked.

If anyone disputes in this matter with you now after (full) knowledge has come to you say: "Come! let us gather together our sons and your sons our women and your women ourselves and yourselves: then let us earnestly pray and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!" (3:61)

The non-negotiable issue for the Qur'an was the divinity of Jesus, whether God or the Son; it is absolutely unacceptable as much as there was no possible negotiation with the polytheist, hence the Qur'ân sometimes calls those who believe in Jesus' divinity either polytheist or unbelievers. So the only possibility to come to terms with the Christian is if they give up their claim about Jesus, an impossible demand. The Our'an further advances to falsify their Christians' argumentations about things they do not know; the final truth is revealed to Muhammad. The claim of both the Jews and the Christian of being the only heirs of Abraham is also falsified on obvious evidence; he was not a Jew neither a Christian because both the Torah and the Gospel were revealed after his death (see 3: 64-67).

Now, the point I would like to indicate is that the Our'an never repudiated the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures; they are both revealed through the same channel through which the Qur'an was revealed, wahy. What is always disputed is the way the people of the book understood and explained these scriptures; the issue at steak is the wrong hermeneutics, and here comes the significance of the verse 7 in the same chapter 3, which was taken by Muslim theologians as setting hermeneutical principal. It reads

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 270ff.

He it is Who has sent down to you the Book: in it are verses that are clearly expressed; they are the foundation of the Book: others are ambiguous. For those in whose hearts is perversity they follow (literally) the ambiguous seeking discord and searching for its hidden meanings but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord"; and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.<sup>24</sup>

My assessment here is that in the context of repudiating the Christian misunderstanding the verses in which the Qur'ân describes Jesus as the 'word' and the 'spirit' from God were declared 'ambiguous' whereas the verses emphasizing his humanity as only a prophet and messenger were declared the 'clear', the backbone of the book. Ambiguous

Another disputed issue between Muslims and Christians is the doctrine of crucifixion, because Muslims believe that the Qur'ân denies it and favor his normal death. Muslims see no conflict between normal death and ascension. Both, Muslims believe, are asserted in the Qur'ân. The context in which both the denying of crucifixion and assertion of ascension exist together is not a dispute with the Christians; it is an argumentation and disputation against the Jews in defense of Mary and Christ. The Jewish blasphemous allegation of adultery against Mary is strongly repudiated and condemned by the Qur'ân. In the same context the claim of the Jews that they killed Jesus, insinuating threat that they can kill Muhammad as well, was also to be repudiated.

The people of the Book ask you to cause a book to descend to them from heaven: indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle) for they said: "Show us Allah in public" but they were dazed for their presumption with thunder and lightning. Yet they worshipped the calf even after clear signs had come to them; even so We forgave them; and gave Moses manifest proofs of authority.

And for their Covenant We raised over them (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai); and (on another occasion) We said: "Enter the gate with humility"; and (once again) We commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath." And We took from them a solemn Covenant.

(They have incurred divine displeasure): in that they broke their Covenant: that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right; that they said "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word; we need no more)"; nay Allah has set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy and little is it they believe.

That they rejected faith: that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge.

That they said "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary the Apostle of Allah"; but they killed him not nor crucified him but so it was made to appear to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts with no (certain) knowledge but only conjecture to follow for of a surety they killed him not.

Nay Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power Wise(4:153-158).

If the issue of crucifixion was as important to the Qur'ân as the issue of the Nature of Jesus, it would have been brought again and again in different contexts. Since it exists only in the context of responding to the Jewish claim, the discourse structure suggests it was denying the capability of the Jews to have done this depending on their own power, and by implication telling Muhammad that their implicit threat to slay him, as they slew Jesus, is not possible to happen because God won't allow it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion about the way this specific verse was isolated and, therefore, manipulated whether in terms of its grammatical articulation or in the meaning of its vocabularies and further more for the theological dispute, see Leah Kinberg art. 'ambiguous', EQ, vol. 1, pp. 70-76. Also my *Al-ittijâh al-'Aqlî fi 'Tafsîr: dirâsa fi mafhûm almajâz fi al-Qur'ân ind 'l-Mu'tazila* (the Rational Trend in Exegesis: study of the Mu'tazilites' concept of metaphor), op cited, pp. 180-9; *Mafhûm al-Nass* (the Concept of the Text), op cited, pp. 179ff.

Now, the question is again which meaning will prevail, togetherness or isolation? This brings now the relationship between the West and the Muslim World into our discussion. How this relationship as affecting the way Muslims 'rethinking' their own tradition to be able to modernize their life without loosing their spiritual power, especially with the new American colonization project?

Related question to be raised is whether Muslims are ready to rethink the Qur'ân or not? Is it possible to consider the open options presented in the Qur'ânic discourse and reconsider the fixed meaning presented by the classical 'ulamâ'? In other words, how far is the reformation of Islamic thought going to develop? I am afraid the answer is not positive, especially with the new American colonization project. Both the new imperial and colonial American project and the building of ghettos in the Middle East are likely to support the most exclusive type of discourse in contemporary Islamic thought. We have to be alert and to join our efforts to fight against that by all possible means.

#### Conclusion

I have argued that the Qur'an is a living phenomenon. A humanistic hermeneutics of the Qur'ân has to take seriously the living phenomenon and stop reducing the Qur'ân to be only a text. The Our'an was the outcome of dialog, debate, despite, argument, acceptance and rejection. This horizontal, communicative and humanistic dimension is in the 'structure' of the Qur'an, not outside it. The invitation to 'rethink the Qur'an' flows from this communicative dimension. This invitation is of vital importance for all Muslims. I have argued not only for the continuation of this process of rethinking but for moving it further toward a constructive method for Muslims, wherever they are, to be actively engaged in formulating the 'meaning of life' in the world in which they live and further develop the spiritual and ethical dimension of their tradition. I am afraid the answer is not positive, particularly in view of Americans new colonizing policy. Both the new imperial and colonial project of the United States of America and the building of ghettos in the Middle East are likely to support the most exclusive and isolating type of discourse in contemporary Islamic thought. These colonial projects give the people no option but to adapt to the hermeneutics of Islam as an ideology of resistance; the hermeneutics of the Pakistân Maududi, which divides the world into two adversaries, echoed in Huntingtonis 'Clash of Civilizations'. So I conclude that we have to be alert and should join our efforts to fight both claims and their consequences by all possible democratic means.